

# NJ Wildlife Updates

For Licensing Agents and Fish & Wildlife Constituents

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## Director's Message



As winter fades, we all look forward to spring and the outdoor activities that come with that season. Soon we will be trying to decide between trout fishing, shad fishing, enjoying the spring bird migration, turkey hunting and early season warmwater fishing. How

fortunate we are to be able to enjoy fabulous fish and wildlife recreation opportunities in the nation's most densely populated state. Please try to join us at Pequest Open House on April 6&7 to celebrate our rich bounty of fish and wildlife and the beginning of spring.

All of us who appreciate our rich natural treasures also see daily examples of how our fish and wildlife resources are threatened by development and sprawl. An article in this issue discusses how critical habitat mapping developed by our Endangered and Nongame Species Program has been proposed for use in the Department's wetland and coastal development regulation programs. If these proposals gain enough public support, core habitat areas critical to all fish and wildlife species will be better protected from fragmentation and the insidious impacts of sprawl. More information on this mapping can be found on our website or by contacting us by phone, mail or email.

Bob McDowell, Director

## PARTICIPATE IN THE GAME CODE PROCESS

The 11-member Fish and Game Council (Council) is responsible for adopting annual revisions to the Game Code (Code) which sets procedures, dates, locations and harvest limits regarding the hunting, trapping and possession of game birds, game mammals and furbearers in the state. Each year the Code revision process begins in January and February. During this time, the Council's Game Committee, which is made up of five Council members, is responsible for reviewing the existing code and identifying potential changes in the code for the upcoming year. Research, inventory and harvest data from Division of Fish and Wildlife biologists are provided to assist the Game Committee in making determinations as to when and where in the state hunting and trapping shall occur, which species may be taken, and in what numbers. Input from the sporting public is also taken into consideration by the Game Committee during this period and used in identifying potential changes to the existing code.

The Game Committee presents the proposed code amendments to the full Council in mid-February. The proposed changes are prepared for publication in the New Jersey Register in April. Publication in the Register begins a 30-day comment period when written comments can be submitted. A public hearing that allows the Council to hear oral comments on the changes to the Code is also scheduled during the 30-day comment period. Written comments and the public hearing both provide opportunities for the

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## GAME CODE (continued)

public to express their views on the amendment to the Code. At the end of the 30-day comment period, the Council reviews the comments received and votes on whether or not to adopt the various amendments at a special meeting held in May.

Annual revision of the Game Code by the Fish and Game Council is a time-honored, interactive process that relies on input from sportsmen and women like you to operate successfully. You can submit your comments on the proposed changes by written

correspondence to the Fish and Game Council, c/o Director's Office, Division of Fish and Wildlife, P.O. Box 400, Trenton, NJ 08625-0400 during the public comment period which is tentatively set for April 15-May 14. To provide input at the hearing, this year's public hearing will be held in early May at the Mercer County Community College, West Windsor Campus, 1200 Old Trenton Road, Trenton, Room CM110.

# IMPORTANT CHANGES IN FRESHWATER FISHING REGULATIONS

Anglers should note the following changes in the 2002 freshwater fishing regulations:

- The regulations for the "Ken Lockwood Gorge" stretch of the South Branch of the Raritan River have been changed from "fly-fishing only" to those of a year-round trout conservation area to increase the number of available trout throughout the year. As a year-round trout conservation area, anglers will no longer be restricted to the use of flies and will, instead, be allowed to use any type of artificial lure. The size limit for trout has been increased from 7 to 15-inches and the daily creel limit for trout has been reduced from six to one. Previously, this stretch was regulated as a fly-fishing only area with an eight-day period in April beginning on the opening day of trout season when the fly-fishing only limitation does not apply and the area is subject to the regular statewide trout fishing regulations with no tackle restrictions. As a year-round trout conservation area, this eight-day exception has been eliminated.
- The "no kill" stretch of the Musconetcong River at Hackettstown has been discontinued and replaced by a seasonal trout conservation area on the Musconetcong River at Port Murray. In a seasonal trout conservation area, the general statewide trout fishing regulations will apply for a six-week period following opening day, after which the regulations for a year-round trout conservation area will apply.
- The use of cast nets no greater than eight feet in diameter is allowed for taking baitfish except in trout stocked waters and special trout regulation areas.
- To protect blueback herring and alewife stocks from over harvest, the baitfishing permit will be issued only for use in lakes of 250 acres or more. Previously,

the permit could be obtained for any freshwater body of the State and allowed the permittee to take an unlimited number of these species while those without a permit were limited to 35 per day. The prime time for harvesting these fish is during their spring spawning run at which time they congregate at "choke points" in rivers (near obstructions, bridges, etc.). Restricting permits to larger water bodies offers some protection to extremely vulnerable stocks in small water bodies.

- The striped bass season is closed during the months of April and May in the Delaware River between the Route 1 bridge in Trenton and the Commodore Barry Bridge. Exceptionally large stripers move into this area at this time to spawn. Although the season is closed, an increasing number of anglers have been targeting these spawning striped bass. While this is technically illegal, the striped bass are all being released, so there is no proof of an intent to catch them. The problem is that the method that is being used to catch them results in a very high hooking mortality of the hooked and released fish. To reduce this mortality rate, anglers are now limited to the use and possession of non-offset circle hooks of size 2 or larger while fishing with any natural bait in this section of the river during the closed season. Recent research findings found that if circle hooks are used in place of regular hooks, hooking mortality can be reduced. The regulation does not apply to smaller hooks, such as those used to catch white perch.

Anglers should refer to the *New Jersey Fish and Wildlife Digest* 2002 Freshwater Fishing issue for additional regulations. Copies of this publication can be obtained by visiting your local sporting goods store or visit our website [www.njfishandwildlife.com](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com).

## CHECK-OFF FOR WILDLIFE

Sportsmen and women have a long history of funding wildlife conservation through license fees and federal excise taxes on sporting equipment. The general public, however, has a dismal record of supporting wildlife conservation. Most people mistakenly believe the taxes they pay fund wildlife programs. Perhaps that is why so few contribute to voluntary funding mechanisms like the Check-off for Wildlife on the New Jersey state tax form. Less than 2% of New Jerseyans that receive a state tax refund check-off a contribution for wildlife.

The Division's Endangered and Nongame Species Program depends mightily on the tax check-off and a portion of the Conserve Wildlife license plate fees to fund work on restoring endangered wildlife and

protecting critical habitats for all wildlife species (See 'Critical Habitat Maps' article). Unfortunately, contributions to both have been declining due to competition from other tax check-off and license plate options. Between 1991 and 2000, for example, revenue from the state income tax check-off declined more than half, to \$232,000.

When you complete your state income tax form this year, continue the sportsmen and women tradition of supporting wildlife conservation. Make a 'Conserve Wildlife' tax check-off contribution if you prepare your own state form. If you have your return prepared professionally, tell your preparer you want to check-off for wildlife.



## CRITICAL HABITAT MAPS BENEFIT ALL FISH AND WILDLIFE

The Division's Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP) has developed GIS mapping that designates habitat throughout the state critical to endangered, threatened or rare species which was recently proposed for use in the state's land use regulation programs.

The proposed rule changes were published in the New Jersey Register as part of amendments to existing rules under two statutes: The Coastal Area Facility Review Act (CAFRA), which governs development in the coastal zone, and the Freshwater Wetland Act, which governs development in areas involving freshwater wetlands.

The mapping was developed under the ENSP's Landscape Project during the last five years. "This is a stirring endorsement of the science that underpins the maps," says Robert McDowell, the director of the Division of Fish and Wildlife. "The proposed use of the Landscape Project mapping by Department of Environmental Protection regulators also represents a major advance in our ability to protect not only endangered and threatened species but all fish and wildlife species. It will increase the public's understanding of fish and wildlife

habitat needs and prove to be a powerful tool for both regulatory agencies and other groups that deal with open space issues."

Protecting contiguous forest patches, wetland complexes and stream corridors important to endangered and rare species ultimately benefits all species including trout, waterfowl, black bears, otters, turkeys, grouse and woodcock.

The public review periods were scheduled to last until March 8 for the CAFRA rule amendment and February 21 for the Freshwater Wetland Act rule. In order to comply with the public review period regulations, the ENSP furnished each county's central library and county clerks' offices with hard-copy books containing all the Landscape Project maps. Mapping is also available on the Division website.

In addition CD-ROM's that contain all the mapping are available—free of charge only during the review periods—through the DEP's Maps and Publications. If you're interested, call 609-777-1038 or go online to [www.state.nj.us/dep/njgs](http://www.state.nj.us/dep/njgs) and select "Publications."

# MAJOR CHANGE IN HUNTER EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Division's Hunter Education Program will now be offered as a modified home-study video based course, with one-day testing and field sessions conducted at centralized teaching locations throughout the state. The Division recognizes that course scheduling, as currently conducted, can be difficult to fit into the hectic schedules of today's lifestyles. In response, we have developed a program that will allow easier access and produce a more advanced hunter ready to meet the serious responsibilities facing all New Jersey hunters.

The Hunter Education Unit has developed a videotape, manual and workbook series designed to cover shotgun, muzzleloading/modern rifle and bow and arrow courses. The video covers information currently provided in the traditional courses while adding new hunting scenarios designed to test the students' split-second decision making ability all responsible hunters must have. Videotapes and workbooks will be available at license agents and Division field offices beginning the last week of February and the first field session will be March 16. A schedule of testing facilities and field session dates for the entire state and year will also be available at these locations and on the Division's web page at [www.njfishandwildlife.com](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com).

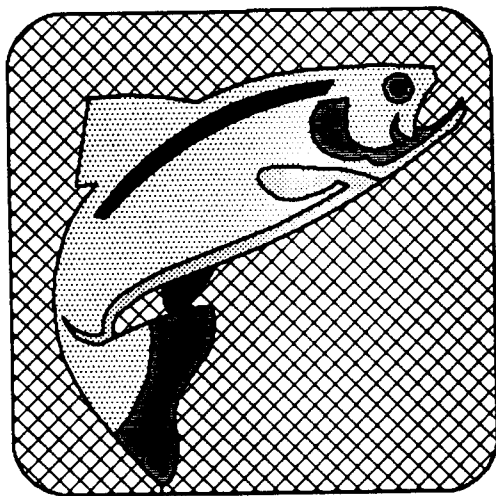
Home study will allow students to learn the classroom material at their own pace, at home, and select the location and date for a one-day course, for archery, shotgun, rifle/muzzleloader or all three classes (if they are prepared to do so) which best suits their own schedule. During the one-day field session the student will be placed with an instructor to complete an extensive field walk and mandatory live-fire session. A review of the home study material and homework will be offered before the day concludes with a mandatory written exam.

The Division is extremely proud that our program is continually recognized as one of the top programs in the country. The future of hunting in New Jersey remains hunter education.

Individuals interested in becoming an instructor with this new Hunter Education program can download an application at [www.njfishandwildlife.com](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com) or call 877-2HUNTJ for further information.

## FREE FISHING DAYS ARE JUNE 1 & 2

The Division of Fish and Wildlife has announced that Saturday and Sunday, June 1 and 2, are this year's annual Free Fishing Days in New Jersey. On these days anyone may fish the Garden State's public waters without a license or trout stamp. All other regulations, including size and daily limits, remain in effect.



"Free Fishing Days are a great opportunity for people who don't fish to join their children or friends who do," said Division Director Bob McDowell. "We also invite

individuals from out of state to see what New Jersey has to offer. Take advantage of not having to purchase a license and get a free sample of the finest freshwater fishing opportunities in the Northeast."

Free Fishing Days provide the perfect chance to become acquainted with a terrific outdoor activity. For beginners, classes are also offered free of charge at the Division's Pequest Trout Hatchery and Natural Resource Education Center in Warren County on both days.

Fishing classes at Pequest are by registration only, and the public is urged to call two weeks prior (908-637-4125) to register. In addition to fishing classes, Pequest offers many exhibits and displays about wildlife, a butterfly garden, picnic areas and hiking trails. There is also a handicapped-accessible fishing site along the Pequest River. The facility is located on Rt. 46, nine miles west of Hackettstown in scenic Warren County.

For those unable to visit Pequest, the Division will be offering events throughout the state in conjunction with the New Jersey's Free Fishing days. Further information about these events will be available on the Division's website.

The Division's website ([www.njfishandwildlife.com](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com)) has a wealth of information on how to get started. The page offers information on current regulations, equipment, species fact sheets, valuable links to related fishing sites and much more.



## DELAWARE RIVER BOAT ACCESS SITES

The New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife has developed a list of boat access sites along the Delaware River. Information provided includes the name of the facility and location, telephone number, access type, fee, GPS coordinates and a "special notes" section. The boat access site list and map are provided in the *New Jersey*

*Fish and Wildlife Digest* 2002 Freshwater Fishing issue. Anglers can obtain a copy of the *New Jersey Fish and Wildlife Digest* by visiting their local sporting goods store or visit our website at [www.njfishandwildlife.com](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com) for an "on-line" version of the Digest.

## ELECTRONIC MAILING LISTS AVAILABLE

The Division of Fish and Wildlife has announced the launching of seven electronic mailing lists available by free subscription. The public can subscribe to one or more lists via the Division's Website to receive periodic e-mail messages related to New Jersey's wildlife and natural resources. People can also unsubscribe at any time.

"We view these lists as a real asset to anyone interested in New Jersey's fish and wildlife," said Division Director Bob McDowell. "This is another example of how the use of technology, in this case the Internet, can help us accomplish our goals more efficiently and better serve the public. These mailing lists will enable us to directly contact and inform interested parties about issues, events and news concerning fish and wildlife."

The public is encouraged to subscribe to any of the lists, which cover a range of natural resource areas. These include:

- New Jersey's Wildlife
- Freshwater Fishing
- Salt Water Fishing
- Hunting
- Shellfish
- Endangered Species
- Natural Resource Education
- Becoming an Outdoors-Woman

To subscribe to one or more of the lists simply visit the Division's Website at [www.njfishandwildlife.com](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com) and click on the link for "Mailing Lists."

## GETTING KIDS HOOKED ON FISHING

The Division of Fish & Wildlife is organizing six Free Fishing Day 'Learn to Fish' events in partnership with New Jersey's sportsmen's groups and Wal-Mart. Kids 8 and older should mark their calendars: June 1 and 2 are Free Fishing Days, a great time to learn how to fish. Kids 16 and younger *never* need a license, but on Free Fish Days, parents too can try out a day of fishing without purchasing a license. Working in cooperation with local sportsmen's clubs, and with the support of Wal-Mart stores, the division will host events to get both kids and their parents into fishing during that weekend.

The Division's 'Learn to Fish' events will be held at six locations throughout the state, in public waters that will be specially stocked by the Division for these events. Kids ages 8 and older who are new to fishing (no tournament pros, please) are welcome to register for

these free events. They will be held on both June 1 and 2 during the morning. Kids can expect to learn about fishing equipment, basic casting and fishing techniques, and spend about an hour or so actually trying their luck. It is not a competition—there will be no prizes for the largest fish caught—and everyone who participates will be a winner if they learn something about fishing and get hooked on the sport.

Locations and sponsoring fishing organizations are tentative. Check the Division's website: [www.njfishandwildlife.com](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com) for an update on where these events will take place.

Registrations will be taken on the phone NO EARLIER THAN MAY 4 by calling the Division of Fish & Wildlife's Pequest office (908-637-4125). Entry is limited and no group registrations will be taken.

## "WILD PLACES AND OPEN SPACES" MAP AVAILABLE

Discover your state's great outdoors with your copy of *New Jersey's Wild Places and Open Spaces*. The publication, designed similar to a road map, offers the outdoors-person a wealth of information on locating and exploring New Jersey's open spaces in a compact and easy-to-read format.

Originally developed as an updated version of the familiar *Guide to Wildlife Management Areas*, the publication not only contains valuable information on

Division wildlife management areas and the variety of wildlife present, but also includes state parks, forests and more! Showcasing a full-color map of New Jersey, more than 700,000 acres of public open space are highlighted with an accompanying wildlife activity grid.

Send check or money order (\$4.00 per map, includes shipping) made payable to: NJ Div. of Fish and Wildlife. Mail to: NJ Div. of Fish and Wildlife, Wild Places Map, P.O. Box 400, Trenton, NJ 08625-0400.

# PEQUEST OPEN HOUSE

The Division of Fish and Wildlife invites the public to attend its Annual Open House at the Pequest Trout Hatchery and Natural Resource Education Center in Oxford, Warren County on Saturday and Sunday, April 6 & 7, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. The hatchery annually produces more than 600,000 trout for stocking throughout the state's public waters. Thousands of visitors come to the Natural Resource Education Center each year for the interpretive and educational programs.

"Open House at the Pequest hatchery is one of the Division's premier events, held just prior to the opening day of trout season," said Division Director Bob McDowell. "This is an event not only for trout anglers, but for everyone interested in the outdoors and New Jersey's wildlife. The Division of Fish and Wildlife invites the public to visit us and join us in a celebration of spring."

As in past years, there will be demonstrations, special displays and activities related to New Jersey's fish and wildlife resources. Freshwater fisheries biologists will demonstrate fish sampling equipment and show how eggs are stripped from fish during the culturing process. Kids' activities include fish printing, aquatic insect explorations, and Fashion a Fish activities. There will be a gill net maze for kids to try out. Youngsters can learn about the Division's new Hunter Education Program and shoot a BB gun or bow under the supervision of a Hunter Education Instructor. Adults may try shooting a

pellet gun, courtesy of New Jersey Rifle and Pistol Club volunteers. There will be short presentations on reptiles and amphibians, a watershed model, and black bear research tools. The Division's Rockport Pheasant Farm will exhibit and release pheasants during the weekend. There will also be a sawmill demonstration each day.

Wildlife artists Ann Dixon, Irene Bowers and Carol Decker will be on hand both days to display some of their work. Other conservation groups will have displays in the Pequest auditorium.

An outdoor "living history" encampment by the New Jersey Muzzle Loading Association will be ongoing both days, featuring the dress, shelters and artifacts of a bygone era. Trout Unlimited will have fly-tying demonstrations and provide an opportunity for the public to try their hand at casting various types of fishing rods. Visitors can feed the fish in the Fishing Education Pond, take a self-guided tour of the facility, hike the Natural Resource Interpretive Trail and take advantage of the picnic areas for lunch.

The Pequest hatchery is located on Rt. 46 nine miles west of Hackettstown in scenic Warren County. The facility can be the site of a family outing during the open house or anytime throughout the year. For more information about the open house or public and group visitation/programs call 908-637-4125 or visit the Division's website at [www.njfishandwildlife.com](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com).

## TROUT SEASON OPENS APRIL 13

Saturday, April 13, is the opening day of the 2002 trout season in New Jersey. At 8 a.m. the season officially begins at all waters open to public angling.

This year, approximately 600,000 brook, brown and rainbow trout will be released into nearly 200 streams and lakes throughout the state by the Division of Fish and Wildlife. The trout are raised at the Division's Pequest Trout Hatchery & Natural Resource Education Center in Warren County and measure 10-11 inches in length with weights between one-half and one pound. In addition to these trout, another 5,000 breeders measuring 16-24 inches in length and weighing an average of 2-3 pounds will be released as well.

Spring trout stocking begins about three weeks prior to the opening day of trout season in April and continues for another seven weeks after the season starts. During the pre-season stocking period, the majority of trout stocked waters are closed to fishing. However, there are two trophy trout lakes, a few holdover trout lakes and several Trout Conservation Areas that remain open for trout angling. Anglers should consult the *New Jersey Fish and Wildlife Digest*, 2002 Freshwater Fishing issue for specific regulations or visit the Division's website at [www.njfishandwildlife.com](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com) for more information on trout fishing.

